

From the Army Acquisition Executive

Recognizing the Strength and Resolve of the Army's Contracting Workforce



When one thinks of the U.S. Army, one thinks of a globally engaged force with world-class equipment, well trained and well led. Our Soldiers and those who lead them are protecting American interests around the globe — at present 237,000 Soldiers in 120 countries. There are many reasons why we are the world's preeminent land combat force, and chief among them is the strength and resolve of our contracting workforce. Contracting here is a multibillion dollar business. It is a business of building the future Army while supporting and sustaining the Current Force. It is an awesome responsibility filled with many challenges and opportunities.

It's hard for me to imagine anything that we, in the U.S. Army, do that doesn't require a contract. Think, for a moment, about our troops in the field. They require living and dining facilities, connections to their families and friends through the post office and e-mail, and many other important quality-of-life services. Most, if not all, require a contract. Now think about the weapon systems and equipment they use and the training they received to handle them so skillfully. All — Strykers, Bradleys, Abrams, Apaches, Black Hawks, Chinooks, just to name a few — require contracted logistics and maintenance support. Next, think about the contracting expertise needed to build our Future Combat Systems, to build new aircraft and to upgrade existing systems. The bottom line is that contracting is essential to all that we do.

How essential? Army contracting is a \$95-plus billion business requiring 5,400 contracting professionals to manage the more than 371,000 contract actions.

Through our Project and Contracting Office, the Army continues its efforts to help in the rebuilding of Iraq's infrastructure. With more than \$12 billion, we are working with local contractors and residents in Iraq to complete nearly 3,400 projects. These projects include roads, schools, hospitals, fire and police stations, and other important facilities such as electrical distribution networks and sewer stations that contribute to a much cleaner and healthier environment. Each project requires a contract and

countless contract actions by just a few contracting officers. Still, the program is essential. Without our reconstruction program in Iraq, rebuilding the country's infrastructure would not be happening.

When our combat troops deploy on almost any mission anywhere in the world, who gets there first? The answer, in most cases, is contracting personnel. When our contracting professionals arrive in some foreign land, nothing is in place — no vehicles, no phones, no tents, no rations, no life support whatsoever. They readily assess what needs to be done and what's available to get it done. They locate contractors, construction equipment and gravel, for example, to get a rough road network established quickly so C-17s can land and bring in equipment and supplies for the troops. And, when the combat troops arrive, along with their weapon systems and equipment, the contracting demands increase even more.

Contracting officers are essential to all deployments. Their customers are the warfighters — the men and women who depend on them to provide the things they need to do their jobs. Success is linked directly to one another. The contracting team's dedication to our warfighters gives them the incentives they need to meet head-on the multiple challenges they face daily. With an extremely heavy workload, they keep our warfighters well equipped, at a high state of readiness and as rested and well fed as possible. Our warfighters have high confidence in the reliability of our contracting professionals to get it right fast.

I also have a deep appreciation for the competence, dedication and hard work of our contracting personnel. We empower them to do their jobs in the smartest way possible, and they respond with great energy and enthusiasm. Their environment is one of innovation, identifying and managing risk, and making decisions rather than avoiding them.

Winston Churchill once said, "I am easily satisfied with the very best." Our contracting workforce is among the very best, and we recognize their excellence with this edition of *Army AL&T Magazine*.

Claude M. Bolton Jr.
Army Acquisition Executive